



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

January 1-January 15, 2009

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Afghanistan's Youth Advance Economic Development:

Afghanistan's young people are ready to play an active role in developing their country's economy. To provide them with the necessary business, management, and leadership skills, USAID sponsors a capacity-building internship program for university seniors. In December 2008, 120 interns graduated from the program and prepared to put their practical education and on-the-job training to use in their future careers.

During the program, university seniors completed three-month long internships at private sector companies like Afghanistan International Bank or public sector organizations like the Export Promotion Agency of Afghanistan, as well as a three-month training program in management, accounting, and marketing. The internship program has trained 578 Afghan students to date, and more than 80 percent have received full time jobs from their host companies. Afghanistan's best and brightest young professionals are on their way to contributing to positive change in their country's development.



An intern graduates from USAID's program at Kabul University. PHOTO: USAID/Afghanistan

AGRICULTURE AND ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Textile Training Fosters 50 New Businesses: USAID is revitalizing the weaving industry in Nangarhar Province through an innovative training program. Weaving was once a key trade in the Rodat District of Nangarhar, but years of war and neglect atrophied craftsmen's skills and eliminated sales opportunities. To rebuild the industry and foster licit economic opportunities, the Rodat Textile Production and Training Center conducts a four-month textile training program to provide weavers with the skills and start-up materials to open their own home-based textile businesses.



Trainees receive wool, nylon, and looms to start their own textile businesses. PHOTO: USAID/ADP/E

Recently, fifty graduates of the training program were honored at a ceremony attended by government officials, the Rodat District Development Assembly, community elders, and the media. At the ceremony, the trainees each received nearly 60 kg of wool and nylon, as well as a loom to start their own small businesses. USAID will also assist the weavers in



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identifying export markets for their products. In November, an Indian textile distribution firm received requested samples of the trainees' high-quality weaving, which will be matched with the needs of the Indian market.

The trainees were very pleased with the opportunity to participate in the program and know that their new skills will enable them to support their families through legal means rather than illicit poppy production. One trainee commented, "We are proud that with [the] assistance of USAID, we [are] once again able to revive the traditional businesses that our area was famous for three decades ago."

DEMOCRACY & GOVERNANCE

Women's Rights Under Islam Discussions

Change Public Perceptions: Advancing gender equality and ensuring women's rights is essential to the formation of a safe, prosperous Afghanistan that provides opportunities for advancement to all of its citizens. To build public knowledge about women's rights under Islam, USAID rule of law project has held 66 seminars on related topics throughout Afghanistan, bringing together 2,858 individuals in discussions on women's rights. Debate is encouraged, and participants learn from legal experts, women's rights activists, religious scholars, and each other. The final seminar was recently held in Kabul, during which participants discussed women's rights in divorce.



Community leaders, teachers, civil society representatives, university students, and religious leaders discuss women's rights under Islam. PHOTO: USAID/ARoLP

This program has empowered women and provided them with the confidence to defend their own rights. As one woman commented, "Coming to Women's Rights Under Islam public discussion was the best day of the month for me. I am now equipped with knowledge I can use to promote women's rights." The conversations also changed how men view the rights of their wives within the family. One participant, having learned that the *mahr* (dowry) was the right of the bride, reported, "After the discussion on *mahr*, I went home and gave the amount that I had promised to my wife 15 years ago as her *mahr*."

Experts Identify Long-Term Trends and Implications for Afghanistan's Future: On December 29, The Asia Foundation released *State Building, Security, and Social Change in Afghanistan: Reflections on a Survey of the Afghan People*, a collection of six essays that analyze the in-depth findings of the largest public opinion survey ever conducted in Afghanistan. The survey, *Afghanistan in 2008: A Survey of the Afghan People*, was



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conducted with USAID support. All essays in this analytical volume inform the Afghanistan policy debate currently under way. In doing so, they temper subjective views of the complex governance environment of Afghanistan with perspective and offer policy advice with a long-term view. Through careful study and interpretation of data collected for the 2008 survey, nine expert analysts on political, social, and developmental issues in Afghanistan and the region identified long-term trends and their implications for Afghanistan's future. The volume, in addition to the 2008 Afghan public opinion poll on which it is based, can be downloaded in its entirety at www.asiafoundation.org



Bamyan Governor Surabi congratulates a graduate. PHOTO: USAID/Afghanistan

Bamyan Civil Servant Training Center Graduates First Class:

The Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC) Provincial Training Center in Bamyan province graduated its first class on Saturday, December 20, 2008, with Bamyan Governor Dr. Habiba Surabi providing a keynote speech. Eighty one civil servants out of four hundred government employees in the province completed six months of standardized courses in Basic English, Basic Management, and Basic Computer Skills. The Bamyan Provincial Training Center was established in May 2008 with assistance from USAID.

EDUCATION

Primary Education Improves for Afghanistan's Children:

Under the Taliban, most of Afghanistan's children did not have the opportunity to go to school and study subjects like math, life skills, and language. To raise the quality of education in the country, USAID is working with Afghanistan's Ministry of Education to build the capacity of teachers and improve teaching methods. As of January 10, USAID has provided training to over 10,000 teachers in subject knowledge and lesson plan development. Primary school teachers in 11 provinces recently received 12 days of training to develop innovative lesson plans for their classrooms. When they return to their schools, they are able to conduct better lessons for their pupils, who are building a foundation of knowledge for the future of Afghanistan.



Building Education Support Systems for Teachers (BESST) trainers during a group work session. PHOTO: USAID/BESST



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A little money went a long way with A Little Help: In 2008, USAID through The Asia Foundation made a small grant to a NGO named “A Little Help”. With the assistance of two international trainers, the NGO trained 20 science teachers from two villages in one of most remote areas of Afghanistan. Teachers received updated hands-on science methodology using donated materials. Each teacher was equipped with a “tool kit” through which they now can teach the nearly 10,000 students in the villages with new skills and enthusiasm.

HEALTH

New Bachelor of Science in Nursing: The USAID-funded Afghan eQuality Alliances Program is sponsoring a collaboration between Kabul Medical University (KMU) and Aga Khan University to establish a Bachelor of Science in Nursing program at KMU. KMU, with the expert assistance of Aga Khan University faculty, held a three-day workshop for twenty of their health education lecturers from December 22-24 to evaluate and align the proposed curriculum with the new national nursing curriculum endorsed by the Ministry of Public Health. The workshop included sessions on developing syllabi, teaching learning strategies, forming assessment and evaluation criteria, and lesson and classroom planning. The nursing program is scheduled to begin at KMU in March 2009.



Kabul Medical University Chancellor Obaidullah Obaid with KMU lecturers and Aga Khan University experts at the opening ceremonies.
PHOTO: USAID/Afghanistan

INFRASTRUCTURE

Afghan Construction Firm Improves Local Road and Infrastructure: In Laghman Province, a women-owned construction company is improving transportation and access to public services for nearly 105,000 residents of Qarghayi District. USAID, through International Relief and Development, did an open-bid competition of women-only firms to build women's capacity in this sector. Hamza Omar Construction and Road Building Company won the contract to rehabilitate the four-kilometer Mendrawar to Qarghayi Road, creating jobs and advancing development in eastern Afghanistan. Signs of success are readily visible. Along the road, newly dug wells provide vital sources of safe drinking water for the community. A new roadside clinic provides healthcare for workers, and will later serve all local residents in the district.



The Mendrawar to Qarghayi Road serves nearly 105,000 citizens of Laghman Province.

PHOTO: USAID/Afghanistan